

**CALIFORNIA STATE  
LANDS COMMISSION**

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## **BOLSA CHICA WETLANDS RESTORATION BEGINS**

### **584-ACRE PROJECT LARGEST IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA HISTORY**

**HUNTINGTON BEACH** — The State Lands Commission announced today the start of work to restore 584 acres of the Bolsa Chica Wetlands, the largest such project in southern California history.

At a groundbreaking ceremony, Lands Commission members joined representatives of seven state and federal agencies collaborating on the project, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Army Corps of Engineers, the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Resources Agency and the California Coastal Conservancy.

"Today marks an important milestone for California's environment – the start of the largest wetlands restoration project in southern California history," said State Controller and Commission Chair Steve Westly. "We're taking out the oil wells and letting nature back in. This groundbreaking means victory in the 35-year battle to preserve this precious resource."

"When I became a member of the Lands Commission in 1999, I was impressed by its long-standing commitment to preservation of California's heritage of wetlands and wildlife," said Lieutenant Governor Cruz M. Bustamante. "This restoration project is part of our continuing and expanded commitment to restoring precious wetlands all along the coast. When completed, the project will provide habitat for California halibut and other marine fishes as well as nesting areas for the snowy plover and other shore birds."

Donna Arduin, Director of the Department of Finance and member of the Lands Commission added, "Projects like this maintain California's nationally recognized leadership role in managing and protecting ocean and coastal resources. This project will increase the abundance and diversity of aquatic life, which is one of the goals of the Governor's ocean stewardship program."

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In 1997 the State Lands Commission acquired 880 acres of the Bolsa Chica lowlands, 584 acres of which are being restored in the project starting today, and acts as the Restoration Projects banker. In addition, the Commission served as the State's lead agency for the CEQA/NEPA process along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Army Corps of Engineers as the lead Federal agencies. The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, as mitigation for port expansion projects, have provided \$80 million for acquisition and restoration. An additional \$30 million will come from State Bond funds (Propositions 40 and 50). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided invaluable planning and design expertise and is the lead agency for construction of the restoration effort.

The Bolsa Chica lowlands are the remnant of a much larger wetland area that once stretched along the northern Orange County coast. In its present configuration, it is bordered on three sides by the City of Huntington Beach and on the fourth by the Pacific Ocean. This wetland was historically a marsh interlaced with full tidal channels radiating from an ocean inlet. Eventually, the natural ocean inlet was blocked. Vast areas of the wetlands were filled and ultimately devoted to housing. For over 50 years the remaining wetlands have been included in an operating oil field. Oil wells have been plugged and more than 18 miles of oil pipelines were removed as a prelude to the restoration project.

The restoration project includes construction of a 367-acre tidal basin, 178 acres of managed tidal areas, three new nesting areas for the snowy plover, and rehabilitation of dune plants on Rabbit Island. Kiewit Pacific Company of Vancouver, Washington will handle the construction and Moffatt & Nichol will provide the planning, engineering and construction management. The project is expected to take more than two years to complete.

Additional information about the Bolsa Chica Wetlands Restoration Project can be found at <http://bolsachica.fws.gov>.

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